Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SANTO 01723 041532Z
ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1723

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, DR
SUBJECT: BALAGUER'S RUNNING MATE CONFIRMED

REF SANTO DOMINGO 1392

1. NOMINATION OF FERNANDO ALVAREZ BOGAERT AS PRESIDENT BALAGUER'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE AND PUTATIVE POLITICAL HEIR WAS CONFIRMED MARCH 31 BY FORMAL SUBMISSION OF REFORMIST PARTY (PR) CANDIDACIES TO CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (JCE). ALVAREZ' CANDIDACY HAD HUNG IN DOUBT EVER SINCE HIS NOMINATION BY PR CONVENTION MARCH 14 (REFTEL). BALAGUER'S SELECTION OF A RUNNING MATE HAS BEEN FREIGHTED WITH SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE DUE TO PRESIDENT'S ADVANCING AGE, IMPAIRED EYESIGHT AND OTHER RUMORED HEALTH PROBLEMS. CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS THAT IF BALAGUER WINS MAY 16 ELECTION HIS VICE PRESIDENT COULD WELL REPLACE HIM DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS OR IN 1982 AS THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

2. DOUBTS ABOUT FIRMNESS OF ALVAREZ CANDIDACY GREW OUT OF STRANGE METHOD USED TO SELECT HIM AT PR CONVENTION: ALTHOUGH CHOSEN BY ACCLAMATION OF REFORMISTA DELEGATES SURPRISED BY THIS NOMINATION (PROPOSED BY PARTY'S SECRETARY GENERAL, HE WAS NOT DIRECTLY NAMED, AS IS CUSTOMARY, BY BALAGUER (WHO WAS NOT PRESENT AT TIME); ALVAREZ' NAME WAS NOT EVEN MENTIONED BY BALAGUER IN HIS OWN ACCEPTANCE SPEECH TO CONVENTION. ALSO, IT QUICKLY BECAME CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SANTO 01723 041532Z

CLEAR THAT ALVAREZ' CANDIDACY AROUSED STRONG OBJECTIONS FROM WITHIN PR AND IN POWERFUL ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SECTORS. FEW DOMINICANS HAD FORGOTTEN THAT ALVAREZ STILL HAS CHARGES PENDING AGAINST HIM FOR ALLEGED EMBEZZLEMENT OF SOME SIX MILLION PESOS WHEN HE WAS DIRECTOR OF STATE SUGAR ENTERPRISE (CEA). CHARGES WERE SHELVED BUT NOT DROPPED IN 1975 WHEN HE WAS NAMED AMBASSADOR TO SPAIN, AND MAY THEREFORE COME BACK TO HAUNT BOTH HIM AND HIS

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

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3. PERHAPS MORE TOUCHY ASPECT OF NOMINATION WAS ALVAREZ' CLEAR INDENTIFICATION WITH ONE OF DR'S TWO ANTAGONISTIC MILITARY CLIQUES, THAT LED BY FIRST BRIGADE COMMANDER MAJ GEN ENRIQUE PEREZ Y PEREZ. MEMBERS OF MILITARY FACTION LED BY NATIONAL POLICE MAJ GEN NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS ARE UNHAPPY AT SELECTIN OF ALVAREZ AND ARE SAID TO BE FEARFUL THAT DELICATE BALANCE MAINTAINED BETWEEN POLITICO-MILITARY POWER GROUPS BY BALAGUER OVER LAST DECADE MAY BE UNDERGOING FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE. WE HAVE REPORT THAT NIVAR HAD HEATED ARGUMENT WITH BALAGUER OVER THIS NOMINATION, AND THERE IS SPECULATION AS TO EFFECT ON BALAGUER-NIVAR RELATIONSHIP IF ALVAREZ' CANDIDACY IS MAINTAINED.

4. SOLIDITY OF ALVAREZ' NOMINATION WAS ALSO SHAKEN LAST WEEK BY SURPRISE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT BALAGUER AND BALAGUER'S FORMER VICE PRESIDENT (1966-70) AND POLITICAL OPPONENT. FRANCISCO AUGUSTO LORA, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FOR OWN PARTY, MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION (MIDA). FOLLOWING PALACE PRESS OFFICE RELEASE IN EARLY MARCH OF A COMMUNIQUE CLAIMING THAT LORA IN EARLIER CONTACTS WITH BALAGUER HAD SOUGHT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM HIM TO UNDERMINE INFLUENCE OF OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS, THE UNEXPECTED MEETING OF TWO FORMER ALLIES STIRRED RUMORS THAT LAST MINUTE DEAL MIGHT BE IN THE MAKING.

5. SUBMISSION OF BALAGUER-ALVAREZ SLATE TO JCE BY MARCH 31
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PAGE 03 SANTO 01723 041532Z

LEGAL DEADLINE HAS STRENGTHENED BELIEF THAT BALAGUER HAS MADE IRREVERSIBLE DECISION TO CARRY ALVAREZ AS HIS RUNNING MATE AND IMPLICIT SUCCESSOR. NEVERTHELESS, NO SOONER WERE THE CANDIDACIES FORMALIZED THAN POLITICAL COMMENTATORS BEGAN TO NOTE THAT DOMINICAN ELECTION LAW PERMITS "ALLIANCES" AMONG PARTIES AND SUBSTITUTION OF CANDIDATES FOR DEATH, DISABILITY OR WITH-DRAWAL UP UNTIL SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. INTEGRATION OF SLATES AND SUBSTITUTION OF VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES THUS REMAIN POSSIBILITIES.

COMMENT. ALTHOUGH NOMINATIONS ARE NOW REGISTERED FOR MAY 16 ELECTIONS, SITUATION IS FAR FROM DEFINITIVE. GIVEN HIGHLY PERSONALISTIC NATURE OF DR POLITICS, PASSION FOR POLITICAL MANEUVERING AND CONSTANT SEARCH FOR POLITICAL DEALS, CHANGES IN ELECTORAL SLATES AND OTHER ASPECTS OF POLITICAL PICTURE COULD STILL TAKE PLACE UP TO SHORTLY BEFORE ELECTIONS.
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20 Mar 2014
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